

STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 257, TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CONDUCT A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING THE COLUMBIA-PACIFIC NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA IN THE STATES OF WASHINGTON AND OREGON.

March 20, 2007

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on S. 257, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of establishing the Columbia-Pacific National Heritage Area in the states of Washington and Oregon.

The Department supports enactment of S. 257 with amendments that are described later in this statement. These amendments would make the study requirements in S. 257 fully consistent with the criteria for National Heritage Area studies that were included in the Administration's proposal for National Heritage Area program legislation that was transmitted to Congress last July. Bills were introduced in the 109th Congress (S. 243, H.R. 760 and H.R. 6287) that incorporated the majority of the provisions of the Administration's proposal, and S. 243 passed the Senate. During the 110th Congress, a similar heritage area program bill, S. 278, has been introduced, and we look forward to continuing to work with Congress on this very important issue.

While the Department supports the authorization of this study, we also believe that any funding requested should be directed first toward completing previously authorized studies.

With 37 national heritage areas designated across 27 states, and more heritage area legislative proposals in the pipeline, the Administration believes it is critical at this juncture for Congress to enact national heritage area program legislation. This legislation would provide a much-needed framework for evaluating proposed national heritage areas, offering guidelines for successful planning and management, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all parties, and standardizing timeframes and funding for designated areas. Program legislation also would clarify the expectation that heritage areas would work toward self-sufficiency by outlining the necessary steps, including appropriate planning, to achieve that shared goal.

Where the mighty Columbia River meets the Pacific Ocean, a unique confluence of American history unfolds. For many millennia, the broad, fog-shrouded, and dangerous Columbia River served as the home to the Chinookan people. Over the years, the Chinook, Clatsop, Willapa, Wiakakum and Cathlamet people developed a rich and complex society based upon trade and the use of the abundant natural resources. These people continue to live and work to keep their culture alive throughout the region.

The entrance yielded to 18th Century maritime and continental explorers after Captain Sir Frances Drake and Captain Cook sailed off the coast in search of the fabled Northwest

Passage. In 1792, the first ship under United States command in the Pacific Ocean, the Columbia Rediviva, was the first non-native ship to enter the mouth of the great river of the west. Captain Robert Gray named the four-mile-wide river after his ship. Two months later, one of British Captain George Vancouver's ships sailed up the Columbia River and claimed both banks of the river for England. This created international tensions over disputed territory that would remain unresolved for over 50 years.

International commerce flourished as American and European ships sought to trade with the Chinook for furs. Ships would travel around Cape Horn, trade for furs along the Columbia, then sail to China where the furs would be traded for silk, spices, porcelain, and other goods.

In 1805, thirteen years after Captain Gray first entered the Columbia River, the Lewis and Clark Expedition made the first overland journey to the mouth of the Columbia, reaching their destination of the Pacific Ocean. The Expedition wintered at Fort Clatsop and successfully returned home. The Corps of Discovery's arrival and stay is commemorated at the sites of the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park and at state park sites in Washington and Oregon, which are working in partnership with the National Park Service to preserve and interpret the Corps of Discovery story.

In 1811, John Jacob Astor established the first permanent American settlement west of the Rocky Mountains, in Astoria. At the outbreak of the War of 1812, Astoria was sold to the British Hudson's Bay Company and was not returned to America until the late

1820's. After more than 50 years of contentious British and American ownership, possession of the region was not resolved until both banks of the Columbia became undisputed United States territory in 1846. Today, Astoria is known for its Historic Districts with Victorian and Craftsman-style homes stacked along its steep hillsides with an active working waterfront.

The natural geography of the Columbia River provided a ready-made homeland defense for Native Americans. At the start of the Civil War, the United States Army followed the example of the native people and constructed forts and coastal defenses at the mouth of the Columbia. Fort Stevens, Fort Columbia and Fort Canby (at Cape Disappointment) remained in continuous operation guarding the Columbia River entrance from the Civil War through the end of World War II.

The confluence of the Columbia River and Pacific Ocean has become known as the "Graveyard of the Pacific." Hundreds of ships lay wrecked at the entrance and along the nearby coast. In order to further trade and commerce, the United States has worked for nearly 150 years to make navigation of the Columbia River safe for mariners. Today, the United States Coast Guard serves as the sentinels of the river, where every year they protect thousands of lives and millions of dollars in property.

For the last 200 years, people from all over the world have settled in communities of the region to work in the industries in the area – fishing, canneries, ship outfitting, timber

harvesting, milling and transportation, and international trade. These resource-based industries have played and will continue to play a significant role in the region's heritage.

The rich history of this region is set against a backdrop of rugged scenic beauty. It includes the headlands at Ecola and Cape Disappointment State parks, old growth forests in the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, abundant wildlife in the Lewis and Clark and Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuges, and miles of gentle beaches on the Long Beach Peninsula and at Seaside, Oregon.

The study authorized by S. 257 would cover four counties close to the confluence of the Columbia River and the Pacific Oceans where there is a strong, broad-based local support for protecting and promoting these resources. It is estimated to cost between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

S. 257 contains most, but not all, of the criteria for National Heritage Area studies that the National Park Service believes is essential for evaluating the feasibility of designating a National Heritage Area. The bill omits criteria related to the identification of a local coordinating entity and its roles and responsibilities. It also omits criteria related to development of a conceptual boundary map. We would be pleased to work with the committee to develop amendments that would address these matters.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the committee may have.